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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 8, 2010
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**RALEIGH COUNTY MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ILLEGALLY
POSSESSING A FIREARM**

BECKLEY, W. Va. – Eric David Bennett, 30, of Cool Ridge, West Virginia, pleaded guilty today before United States District Judge Irene C. Berger to possessing a firearm after having been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence. Bennett faces up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine when he is sentenced on March 17, 2011.

The conviction stems from an investigation conducted by the Raleigh County Sheriff's Department. In August 2008, Bennett was convicted of domestic battery in Raleigh County Magistrate Court. Upon his conviction, Bennett was prohibited from possessing a firearm. As part of his plea agreement, Bennett stipulated that he resided with his girlfriend near Beckley, West Virginia until October 5, 2008. On January 9, 2009, deputies executed a search warrant at his residence. During the execution of the search warrant, deputies seized two safes. Authorities obtained search warrants to open the safes and located a pistol, a rifle, and two shotguns. Bennett subsequently admitted to authorities that the firearms belonged to him and that he had possessed the firearms on October 5, 2008.

Assistant United States Attorney John L. File is handling the prosecution.

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